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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000625

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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/SE WILLIAMSON, NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PREF PHUM SU

SUBJECT: MINNAWI ON CENSUS, BILATERAL TALKS, AND PROPOSED DPA CONFERENCE

REF: KHARTOUM 585

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On April 21, Senior Assistant to the President, Minni Minnawi, told CDA Fernandez that the census will not be accurate in Darfur, that the U.S.-Sudan bilateral negotiations legitimizes the NCP and marginalizes minority political voices, and that a recent aborted trip to Juba makes him question his relationship with the SPLM. Minnawi also provided input on the proposed DPA implementation conference (reftel) and stated that a preparatory committee will be formed. END SUMMARY.

CENSUS

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¶2. (C) Minnawi opened the meeting commenting on the census and passing us a copy of his letter to President Bashir outlining SLM/MM's position on the census and the elections. (Note: This letter will be translated and transmitted to AF/SPG. End Note). Minnawi stated that he spoke to GoSS President Salva Kiir on April 20, and that in Minnawi's assessment, Kiir appears confused, as he says that the GoSS will not accept the census results after agreeing to participate in it. CDA Fernandez explained the difficult position that the GoSS is in, pressured by the international community to participate while realizing that the census may be manipulated by the NCP or accurately yield lower population figures for the GoSS. Minnawi emphasized that the large numbers of Darfur's IDPS and refugees will yield inaccurate census results and that "70 percent of the areas of Darfur are empty as these people were forcibly displaced."

CDA Fernandez stated that while the South may discount the census on illegitimate technical grounds, those in Darfur may have much more valid reasons (such as displacement and security concerns) for questioning the census and the U.S. needs to try to make this distinction clear.

BILATERAL TALKS

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¶3. (C) Minnawi and SLM MP Ali Traio stated that the ongoing bilateral talks between Khartoum and Washington legitimize the NCP. "The talks and the way the press described the Rome event gives people the idea that the U.S. Government is ignoring the people of Darfur and undermining the native Darfuri movements," stated Traio. CDA Fernandez emphasized that the talks should not yet be considered a comprehensive roadmap, but a technical discussion focusing primarily on UNAMID deployment and humanitarian access. He noted that FM

Deng Alor had been advised by the CDA personally that it would be useful to include someone from Minnawi's movement at Rome but this had not happen. Charge said that the U.S. could consider inviting representatives from minority groups within the Government of National Unity (such as the SLM/Minnawi) to the next round of talks tentatively scheduled in Khartoum but that would require NCP/SPLM buy-in and approval by Washington. "You talk about Darfur and work with one of the signatories (i.e. the NCP) but you leave the people of Darfur out of the discussions," stated Traio.

SNUBBED BY THE SPLM?

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¶ 14. (C) Minnawi stated that on April 19 he attempted to travel to Juba, but at the conclusion of the two-hour flight, he was unable to land due to an obstruction on the runway. Minnawi said that after circling for approximately an hour, the pilots recommended that he return to Khartoum. He stated that he agreed and that he was interviewed by security agents upon his landing in Khartoum. Minnawi stated that for the last two days Foreign Minister Deng Alor promised to visit him at Minnawi's home, and that he waited for hours, but that on both days Alor failed to show up. Minnawi stated that he was not sure whether the SPLM or the NCP was responsible for the airport difficulty, but that it was likely an intentional obstruction of his visit. He stated that he has no further plans to travel to the south, but will instead be going out into the field in Darfur at the end of the week.

DPA CONFERENCE

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¶ 15. (C) Minnawi appeared receptive to a proposed conference on Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) implementation roughly corresponding with its two-year anniversary (reftel). He said that SLM/MM will need to carefully consider what message they hope to send by holding such a conference. "We can either come out and say 'we have failed' or 'there has been

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'some progress' but we need to be clear," stated Minnawi. Ali Traio emphasized that this should not just be a workshop where "we just talk shop or do public relations" but that there is an actionable outcome to the meeting. Minnawi and Traio agreed that a committee will be formed to start planning for the conference. CDA Fernandez received a late night call from Minnawi only two days before where Minni called signing the 2006 DPA "the biggest mistake of my life."

COMMENT

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¶ 16. (C) It is unfortunate that Minnawi was unable to meet with the SPLM in Juba and upon his return to Khartoum. Charge passed a message to GOSS Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biong Deng the day before encouraging greater interaction with Minni but that does not seem to have worked. As positive a development as it would be, there are many challenges to an SLM/MM-SPLM alliance (the least of which should be travel). In desperate financial straits, Minnawi is likely pursuing his request for a loan from the SPLM, which Kiir refused during Minnawi's last visit to Juba in March. Inviting Minnawi and other marginalized leaders to the next round of bilateral talks could help contextualize the discussions and demonstrate to both the NCP and the SPLM that the U.S. values all members of Sudan's Government of National Unity, but it could very well be unacceptable to both parties. While Minnawi's influence in both Darfur and Khartoum remains tenuous and command and control within the SLM is weak, he still holds sway over the largest number of, often ill-disciplined, rebel fighters in Darfur and should not be discounted.

¶ 17. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ